



# FAA Intercom

## Federal Insurance Premiums Rise Again

Premium rates for FAA employees covered under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) will increase an average 10.9 percent for fee-for-service plans like Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Employees covered by HMO plans will see an average increase of 8.5 percent.

Weighted by population, the overall average increase will be 10.5 percent.

The rise in rates translates into an average \$3.50 increase per biweekly paycheck for self-only FEHBP enrollees. Those with family coverage will pay \$9 more each paycheck.

Janice R. Lachance, director of the Office of Personnel Management, blamed the increases on the rising cost of prescription drugs, which accounts for about 40 percent of the increase. Greater use of medical services, the expanded use of medical technology and a growing older population also contributed to the increase.

Lachance said her agency chose to raise premiums "rather than reduce benefits or take more money out of the pockets of those most in need of care."

There was some good news despite the increases.

Employees will be able to minimize the impact of cost increases through premium conversion. This allows employees to pay their health care premiums before taxes.

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## FAA Pilots Don't Have a Leg to Land on



Bill Tinney (left), Flight Inspection aircraft maintenance supervisor, and Dan Murphy, Flight Inspection aircraft engineering maintenance technician, supervise salvaging of the FAA Beechcraft.

Two FAA employees recently underwent the training flight of their lives when they had to execute an emergency landing without landing gear at Ted Stevens International Airport in Anchorage, Alaska.

Spencer Hill, an aviation safety inspector from the Anchorage Flight Service District Office, was undergoing routine quarterly currency training Sept. 13. Inspectors train at least every 90 days in all the aircraft they operate. Maurice Hendrickson, a fellow aviation safety inspector, was with him that day.

While making the first of several practice approaches to Kenai Airport in an FAA-owned Beechcraft King Air, they

detected problems with the landing gear. "When I put the landing gear down, [the right gear] hung for a minute and then snapped down," Hill recalled. "It was not a normal indication that everything was going smoothly." When the light for the discharge bottle — used to extinguish engine fires — lit up, they suspected a more serious problem.

To be on the safe side, they diverted to Anchorage, about 40 miles away. Anchorage Tower eventually confirmed the pilots' suspicions: the right landing gear had not extended.

This is the type of situation that FAA  
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### In This Issue:

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Read about two FAAers fighting to stay on the job despite disabilities (pp. 6-7).



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## News in Brief

### Five SMOs Win Awards

Airway Facilities announced the winners of its Systems Management Office (SMO) of the Year awards.

The Golden Gate (Calif.) SMO won in the facility/service performance category; Chicago was recognized for resource management; Columbia (S.C.) scored first in business performance; and the best overall performance went to Pacific Desert (Calif.). The Miami SMO won for most improved facility.

SMOs operate and maintain NAS equipment in the field.

### Home, Sweet Home

Federal and local officials gathered to dedicate the Eastern Region's new headquarters located on land adjacent to JFK International Airport.

The 5-story, 220,000-square-foot facility will house 750 employees. It features state-of-the-art security, energy-efficient climate control, and the latest hi-tech accommodations for telecommunications, satellite and cable connections, data processing and training.

The U.S. government will lease the facility for 20 years at an annual cost of \$9 million.



This new building will house Eastern Region's headquarters for at least the next 20 years.

### FAA Gets International Support on HazMat

The FAA and the United Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority have agreed to work together to promote dangerous goods inspections and enforcement.

The two organizations will coordinate investigation of incidents and share safety information on dangerous goods.

"Improper shipments of hazardous materials by air is a global problem that requires international cooperation," said Administrator Jane Garvey. She added that the latest agreement builds on an already strong alliance with the CAA.

### Summer of Discontent

Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater last month held sessions at airports around the country to discuss airline passengers' summer of discontent with poor customer service and flight delays.

Slater said he wanted to take the meetings out of Washington to develop a plan that will put the customer first by reducing delays and cancellations. "Our effort to improve customer service ranks second only to safety," he said.

The airport sessions follow up on highly-publicized meetings held in August with representatives from airlines, labor unions, consumer organizations, airports, travel agents, state and local governments and trade associations.

Among the airports he visited were Chicago O'Hare, New York LaGuardia, Miami International and Detroit Metro Wayne County.

### Getting a Peak at Capstone

The FAA's Capstone technology was unveiled to more than 200 aviation industry officials at the University of Alaska Anchorage's aviation complex.

Attendees viewed a demonstration of the new "in-cockpit" technology that provides pilots with enhanced "situational



This Capstone display shows terrain avoidance graphics. The white spot in the middle is Mt. McKinley.

awareness." It is another tool a pilot can use in making decisions about when and where to fly.

Pilots keep track of other nearby aircraft equipped with Capstone technology, as well as receive real-time weather graphics. A terrain advisory feature is also part of the system. Air traffic controllers in Anchorage will be able to see radar-like targets of the Capstone-equipped aircraft on their displays.

Fifty-five aircraft are currently equipped under the federally funded demonstration program, which is aimed at reducing aviation accidents. UPS, which is participating with the FAA on a similar project, will equip its aircraft with the devices in the near future to take advantage of the safety features.

### DOT Enforces Disability Discrimination Law

The Department of Transportation's Aviation Enforcement Office settled with Air Canada over the carrier's failure to transport a passenger with a disability.



The DOT said Air Canada removed a passenger with limited mobility even though the passenger held a valid ticket for a flight from Montreal to Washington. The passenger was removed from the flight in violation of the carrier's own policies because a flight attendant, unaware of the nature of the passenger's disabilities, mistakenly believed that she required an attendant to travel.

The incident occurred prior to April 5, 2000, when the Air Carrier Access Act first became applicable to foreign airline flights to and from the United States. Air Canada agreed to cease and desist from violations in the future. It reviewed the incident with the attendant involved, incorporated the incident as an example in its flight attendant training program, and apologized in writing to the passenger.

### Home Sweet Home, Part Two

It took seven years but the St. Louis Automated Flight Service Station has a new permanent home.

Air Traffic Director Ron Morgan joined more than 100 people at the dedication ceremony for the 2,600-square-foot facility that is home to 36 air traffic controllers and supervisors. The original facility was washed out in the great flood of 1993. Since then, FAA employees have worked out of a makeshift facility.

Employees from the NAS Implementation Program worked hard to accommodate Airway Facilities and Air Traffic while installing equipment.

The St. Louis AFSS provides information to pilots operating in the southern two-thirds of Illinois and the eastern third of Missouri. It also provides weather observations for operations at Spirit of St. Louis Airport.

### 20 Years of Operational Excellence

Still in St. Louis, Air Traffic Director Ron Morgan also visited the Spirit of St. Louis Tower to recognize 20 years of safety. Between Jan. 1, 1980 and Dec. 31, 1999, the tower handled 3.4 million operations without one operational error or deviation.

The tower provides air traffic control primarily for general aviation aircraft. It is ranked first for general aviation traffic in the FAA's Central Region.

Several of the 14 controllers on staff have worked at the facility for at least 15 years.

### Countdown to Kitty Hawk

A press conference kicked off the Experimental Aircraft Association's "Countdown to Kitty Hawk," a series of celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary of the Wright Brothers first flight. The program will conclude Dec. 17, 2003 with the flight of a new Wright Flyer, the only accurate flying reproduction of the original.

The EAA commissioned Ken Hyde to build the reproduction. Hyde is co-founder of the Wright Experience, an effort to recreate the aircraft and knowledge of the Wright Brothers that lead to the first successful flight.

The National Park Service has

designated the reproduction as the only aircraft to fly the first flight path at 10:35 a.m. on Dec. 17, 2003.

In addition to the first flight recreation, EAA will host a series of commemorative and educational programs. Also planned are a number of documentaries chronicling the construction of the airplane and the event.

### Don't Forget about the Employee Attitude Survey

Did you take the opportunity to provide FAA management with feedback by filling out the Employee Attitude Survey? If you have not returned your survey, please do so. If you have not received a survey in the mail, or have a question about the survey, call Paul Twohig at (202) 267-3860.

### Correction

A caption in the September 2000 issue of *FAA Intercom* (p. 9) was incorrect. The photo shows pilots gathered around the Oshkosh Flight Service Station display case checking weather and forecast information.



Ken Hyde will build a reproduction of the Wright Flyer.



# Pilots' Training Mission Becomes a Real-Life Drama

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pilots are trained to handle. The pilots reacted with textbook precision. They went through the list of emergency procedures while keeping in contact with Anchorage approach control for traffic reports. Ground maintenance employees, FAA officials at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center (which oversees FAA aircraft) and Beechcraft staff were contacted for assistance.

With all but one option ruled out, the decision was made for an emergency landing with gear up.

By the time they finished circling the airport burning off fuel, they were approaching the fourth hour of a grueling flight. Yet, neither man admitted to being scared. "You're not nervous," Hill said. "You're just working through the problem, trying to figure out what's going on. This is what the training is all about." In fact, Hill and Hendrickson were going through emergency landing procedures for the second time that day. Only this time, they were doing it for real.

Hendrickson took over as pilot for the landing. He said he wasn't concerned about

a belly-up landing. "You have to make what-if type decisions long before you get in an airplane," the 35-year pilot explained. "I've never read about anyone getting hurt in an intentional belly-up landing."

He gave Hill his instructions: At 10 feet, kill the engines, close the firewall valves that locks the fuel up, and cut the electrical power to avoid sparking. Hendrickson reduced his speed to 75 knots, the minimum recommended for a King Air, then chose a runway with a headwind to help slow the aircraft further.

The plane landed on its belly and skidded 870 hundred feet to a stop. No foam was used because that can cause sliding and loss of control. Foam also could increase damage if it is ingested into the engine.

Outside of a slight grinding sound and the muffled thumps of the propellers hitting the pavement, the skid was surprisingly quiet. Hill barely had a chance to look up from his control panel before it was over. Hendrickson and Hill walked away without so much as a bruise.



Primary damage from the landing was to the propellers and engines. Overall damage was remarkably minimal.

Only later that evening did Hill feel any kind of reaction. "I felt like I'd stuck my finger into a light socket. I was wired." By next day, he was ready to fly again.

There was surprisingly little damage to the aircraft, outside of the propellers and the engines. A broken actuator caused the landing gear problem. Investigations continue into why it broke.

What could have been a fatal situation to many pilots was simply an advanced training course for the FAA pilots. "I think that the training we get is really good," Hill said. "It prepared us for an emergency."

"I've been asked would I do anything different and I say no," said Hendrickson. "Every choice that we made was the correct one."

Hill (left) and Hendrickson landed this King Air on its belly after the gear did not lower. In this photo, the plane has been lifted and the gear extended.







## Gains Made in GAIN

The pursuit of safer skies worldwide through information collection and sharing moved a major step forward with the Fourth Global Aviation Information Network (GAIN) World Conference in Paris, hosted by Airbus Industrie and Air France.

In keeping with the conference theme of "Safety Information Sharing: Concept to Products," GAIN working groups demonstrated a number of products that expand the collection, analysis and sharing of aviation safety information.

The Aviation Operator Safety Practices working group provided conference attendees with a CD-ROM containing a 236-page "Operator's Flight Safety Handbook." Response to the CD was so positive, several groups offered to pay to make copies.

The Analytical Methods and Tools working group demonstrated various analytical tools used by airlines to extract useful information from large quantities of safety data.

The Global Information Sharing Prototypes working group demonstrated two prototype systems that can exchange airline safety event reports securely in near-real time. Safety event reports cover incidents such as in-flight engine shutdowns or unstabilized approaches.

The conference also featured a demonstration of a GAIN Web site with links to 100 aviation-safety data and information sites from around the world and descriptions of about 60 methods and tools that can be used to analyze safety data.

Representatives from 20 government agencies discussed how governments can best contribute to and benefit from GAIN. They approved a proposal to form a government support team that would include representatives from the aviation authorities in several countries, as well as multi-government organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, Joint Airworthiness Authority, and Eurocontrol.

Tim Logan, director of flight safety and quality assurance at Northwest Airlines and chair of the GAIN steering committee, challenged the aviation community to use the products developed by the working groups and work together to collect and share information to improve aviation safety worldwide.

This year's conference attracted more than 175 aviation safety professionals from 23 countries, representing airlines, airframe and engine manufacturers, avionics suppliers, government and other aviation organizations.

More information about GAIN and the conference can be found at [www.gainweb.org](http://www.gainweb.org).



Logan (right) presents the first "GAIN Outstanding Leadership Award" to Christopher Hart, FAA assistant administrator for System Safety, who spearheaded GAIN at its inception.

## Industry Advisory Council Takes Shape

The first seven members of a new FAA advisory group were sworn in Sept. 18.

The Management Advisory Council was mandated by the FAA Reauthorization Act of 1996 to give advice to the administrator on policy, spending, funding and regulatory matters affecting aviation.

The council will consist of 18 members, 10 of whom are appointed by the president to represent aviation interests.

Five members are appointed by the secretary and will serve as a subcommittee focusing on air traffic services. There also is one designee each from the Department of Transportation, the Department of Defense,

and an air traffic services union.

The first seven members are: J. Randolph Babbitt, former president of the Airline Pilots Association; Robert W. Baker, vice chairman of AMR Corp.; Edward M. Bolen, president of the General Aviation Manufacturers Association; Geoffrey T. Crowley, president and CEO of Air Wisconsin; Robert A. Davis, former Boeing vice president; Deborah Branson, a private attorney; and Kendall W. Wilson, a private financial analyst.

Council members will serve one- to three-year terms. Subsequent appointments will be for three years.



The first seven members of the Management Advisory Council are sworn in by DOT Deputy Secretary Mort Downey.



# For this FAAer, 'Survivor' Means more than a Television Show

Musician Bob Dylan sang about a "Simple Twist of Fate." But twists of fate are rarely simple.

In May 1999, Teresa Farrell was one of 13 individuals recognized by the administrator with the FAA Equal Employment Opportunity Award for her work with the People with Disabilities Program at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center. The center's program was even cited for an unprecedented two consecutive years in the President's disabilities educational kit. Farrell traveled around the country, spreading her message of compassion and assistance for people with disabilities.

Today, Teresa Farrell is a person with a disability, fighting to continue working in the face of crushing pain and mounting medical bills. She said she feels like a candidate for TV's "Survivor."

"It's ironic we've had such recognition," Farrell said about the program she leads. "Now I see it through different eyes."

On May 15, 2000 while driving home from work, Farrell was hit head-on by a car whose accelerator pedal had stuck. The driver of the other car remains in critical condition and is not expected to live. Farrell was able to exit her vehicle on her own and even tried to assist the other driver. "I was pretty shaken up. I wasn't feeling any pain at that moment," she recalled. "I kept telling myself I was okay." Farrell refused medical treatment at the scene, complaining only of a headache.

The headache hasn't disappeared since the accident. In fact, it's gotten worse. It abates for part of the day, but after four or five hours, it returns. "The headaches are debilitating. They make me nauseous. If I don't lie down, I know I am going to have a monster headache. Some days I have them anyway."



Teresa Farrell

The pain is a symptom of a condition laymen call "whiplash," or head and neck trauma. Six discs in her neck were damaged. As the extent of her injuries became apparent, time off from work mounted until she ran out of sick and annual leave.

Generous support from co-workers and others in the disability field have allowed her to work half days since her return to work in early July. But she knows that eventually she will have to take leave without pay.

She also is learning to live the life of people she once helped.

Medication controls her tremors and shaking — just one side effect of the damage to her central nervous system — but it affects her work. "My problem solving is not as good or quick. I'm not as sharp."

She tries to ease the pain with jokes about being a "walking pharmacy," but the humor fades when the costs are considered. She takes seven prescriptions — down from 17 immediately after the accident — at an average cost of about \$16 each. She has undergone nearly three months of physical therapy, including painful deep heat treatments with ultrasound. She's undergone two MRIs and outpatient surgery on her neck.

Farrell is also learning to accept the little unintended indignities that occur daily but build up psychologically over time. On a recent doctor's appointment, the nurse handed an information clipboard to her husband and asked him to fill it out for her. Farrell experienced a situation common to many people with disabilities: the assumption that they cannot perform basic

duties for themselves.

Then there is the outward appearance of wellness that belies a real disability. "You tend to forget about people with disabilities you can't see," she said. Their battle is just as real as for those people with more obvious physical disabilities, Farrell noted.

She's confronted with the discomfort that some show in dealing with people with disabilities. They feel embarrassed or don't know how to act towards people different from them. "Immediately, you learn who your friends are," Farrell said.

She's learned she has plenty of them. Her work in the disability field has come back to her in many ways. The people she used to counsel now approach her in the hallways. "I think in their own way they are counseling me at a much more personal level than what I provided for them before."

With their good wishes and the schedule accommodations made by her supervisor in AML-30, Farrell has fought back against her disability. But much work remains both personally and institutionally.

Despite working three years as an advocate for people with disabilities, Farrell sees more clearly the need for the agency to broaden its perception and understanding of people with disabilities. "I think the FAA needs to open its eyes to disability as a whole," she said. "It's unrecognized and underrepresented as an employee group."

Fighting to remain a contributing member to society at the age of 37, Farrell said her experience serves as a reminder that disabilities don't result just from birth defects or advanced age. "You never know when it's going to happen to you," she said.



## ment Awareness Month

# Creating the Future One Step at a Time

Every day Greg Tipton goes to work, it's an uphill climb.

The 100 steps he ascends to take his position as controller at the Ashville (N.C.) Tower is a good workout, particularly for somebody with spina bifida who wears leg braces for support and sometimes has to use a cane to get out of his chair.

Spina bifida is a fault that develops in a fetus's spinal column in which vertebrae fail to form properly, leaving a gap. This can cause neurological problems that worsen over time.

Life's been pretty much of a struggle for Tipton, though you wouldn't know it talking to him. He's fought hard against his affliction and won some important battles. When necessary, he's accepted the physical limitations that come with the condition. He never has accepted the limitations that people have tried to place on him.

The condition delayed Tipton's ability to walk until age 2 ½. Even then, he needed leg braces and a walker. At this critical juncture in his life, his mother made a brave and difficult decision: Her son would grow up as normally as possible.

"She was pretty far sighted," Tipton acknowledged. He recalled his mother taking him out on the street and forcing him to walk, despite the disapproving looks from their neighbors. "I'd be crying because I didn't want to do it. She pushed me a lot. It helped."

Even relatives questioned his mother's actions. In kindergarten, Tipton's teachers panicked when he climbed to the top of the slide. They wouldn't let him slide down until they called his mother for permission.

It often took 30 minutes for his mother to strap on his leg braces because he resisted the pain they caused. He could walk without them, but his bad posture would make things worse in the future.

All the work and struggle paid off with what Tipton describes as a fairly normal

childhood. He played organized baseball and pick-up basketball and football games. He boxed in Golden Gloves competitions as a 10 year old and still participates in Bike-a-Thons for the American Heart Association.

The hard work in his early years prepared him for the second part of his life, both at work and at home.

He initially studied engineering in college, but soon realized it wasn't for him. His mother knew some controllers at the Knoxville Tower and suggested he take the controllers' test. He passed and within a month was training at Oklahoma City.

There's been little accommodation for his condition at the tower, and Tipton doesn't seem to think he needs any. A new tower is planned in a few years with an elevator that will go almost all the way to the top. Tipton is content to wait.

He's in a bind, though, because his condition has produced new symptoms that require medication that would disqualify him as a controller. He's trying to earn enough points to move into a position that does not require medical certification.

Meanwhile, he and his wife, Angela, tend to their family, which includes Elizabeth, 12; Suzanna, 6; Evan, 4; and Katie, 1 ½. The three youngest children are adopted and suffer from a variety of disabilities. Suzanna is wheelchair-bound with cerebral palsy. Evan has Prader-Willi Syndrome — something like Downs Syndrome, but with the additional side effect of extreme obesity. Katie has hydrocephalus, a fluid build-up in the brain.

Through the experienced and loving eyes of Tipton, their disabilities seem more a part of their personalities than drawbacks. "Just because we have something doesn't make us less than a person," he said. "A lot of times, it makes people who they are."

The Tiptons have one goal for their children: making them as independent as possible and contributing members to society. Angela assumes the roles of mother,

teacher and therapist. "She is like my mother," her husband said. "Push, push, push. I don't care if it hurts. Get up and do it." Elizabeth, meanwhile, started and teaches an awareness and support group for children who have siblings with disabilities.

The Tiptons know their children will have physical limitations. But they want them to discover for themselves what those limitations are. Too many assumptions are made by others that wouldn't necessarily hold true.

His children have helped Tipton expand his own ability to love. "Everybody who has been around my kids have been changed in some way." The same is probably true for their father.



(Clockwise, from left) Elizabeth, Angela (holding Katie), Greg, Evan and Suzanna make up the Tipton family.



## People



Irish Flynn

### **Flynn Announces Retirement**

Cathal "Irish" Flynn, associate administrator for Civil Aviation Security, will retire Oct. 20. No replacement or acting associate administrator had been named at press time.

Flynn joined the agency in December 1993 after working for Science Applications International Corp. as a senior analyst for civil aviation security and military special operations.

Prior to that, he served with the U.S. Navy, retiring with the rank of Rear Admiral. He also was a Navy SEAL and participated in two tours of Vietnam.

Flynn plans to return to California.



Laura Brown

### **Boston Reporter Named to Public Affairs Post**

Laura Brown, the Boston Herald's transportation editor for more than a decade, has been named deputy assistant administrator for Public Affairs.

Brown has covered aviation in the Boston area and won a variety of awards for her work from the New England AP News Executives Association, New England Press Association, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Women's Transportation Seminar.



Bruce Butterworth

### **Butterworth Leaves Civil Aviation Security**

Bruce Butterworth, director of Civil Aviation Security Operations, has been named associate director for finance and administration at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

Butterworth served at the FAA for almost 12 years, beginning in the Office of International Aviation. He then became director of policy in Civil Aviation Security before taking over security operations five years ago.

Lee Longmire has been named acting director for policy in Civil Aviation Security.



Frank Del Gandio

### **Former FAA Administrator Honored**

The Aero Club of Washington is honoring Najeeb Halaby, the FAA's second administrator, with the Donald D. Engen Aero Club Trophy for Aviation Excellence.

The Engen Trophy goes to Halaby for his lifetime achievements in aviation. He has played a leadership role in all facets of aviation, and is known as an innovator, spokesman and advocate.

He served as a test pilot during World War II, held several important positions in the State Department, NATO and the Department of Defense, and led the FAA from 1961 until 1965. He also was chief executive officer for Pan Am from 1969 to 1972.

### **ASPA Recognizes Western-Pacific Region Employee**

Sam Samad, an employee in the Western-Pacific Region's Airports Division, received the 2000 Harry Scoville Award for Academic Excellence for his significant contribution to public administration.

In bestowing the award, the American Society for Public Administration cited Samad's publications about agency programs and the aviation industry as contributing significantly to the public's understanding of the FAA mission. He has published papers on performance management, risk reduction, resource planning and fast track programs.

As a technical reviewer of management journals, he has reviewed numerous papers and standards and made recommendations regarding technical content to magazine editors.





### NHCFAE Recognizes

#### Aeronautical Center Employee

Barbara R. Silva, a deputy program director at the FAA Logistics Center, was honored at the National Hispanic Coalition of Federal Aviation Employees' 22nd annual training conference.

Silva was presented with a Presidential award in recognition of her contributions to the NHCFAE and for being instrumental in furthering the agency's equal employment opportunity initiatives.

### FAAer Reaches Pinnacle

Frank Del Gandio, manager of the Recommendation and Analysis Division in the Office of Accident Investigation, received the Pinnacle Award from Embry-Riddle University.

The award, which is given every two years, recognizes Del Gandio for his work in accident investigation, investigator training and the FAA blood-borne-pathogen protection program.

Del Gandio alerted the FAA to the need to protect air safety inspectors and investigators from blood-borne pathogens that might be present during an aircraft accident investigation.

He has served as the FAA's investigator-in-charge for 45 major accidents and 25 field investigations. He also serves as the president of the International Society of Air Safety Investigators.

### FAA Says Thanks to ICAO Rep

The FAA presented an award to Paulo Imre Hegedus, director of the International Civil Aviation Organization's South America office, for his long service to the international aviation community.

John Hancock, deputy director of International Aviation, and Santiago Garcia, senior international representative, represented the FAA at the ceremony.

Hegedus has directed ICAO's activities in South America since 1988, during a period of unprecedented growth and technological advance. His support of the Y2K effort and cooperation with the FAA was a significant factor in the FAA's success in the region.

Hegedus was honored during the Ninth Caribbean and South American Regional Planning Meeting.



Hancock (left) presents an FAA award to Hegedus recognizing his work in South America.

## Air Traffic Services Holds MWE Conference

The Office of Air Traffic Services took a major step in creating a better workplace for its employees by holding its first Model Work Environment conference at the Center for Management Development.

MWE coordinators from the regions and Headquarters joined representatives from employee associations, SUPCOM, unions and the Office of Civil Rights to discuss successful MWE strategies and how they might be applied to Air Traffic Services.

Shirley Jones, Air Traffic Service's national manager for model work environ-

ment, said the participants were energized, creative and committed to developing an infrastructure that improves employees' workplace atmosphere.

"AAT, AAF, ARS, ASC and ATQ worked together to maintain our vision of a productive, rewarding, fair, safe and satisfying work environment," Jones said.

A video of the action planning session has been prepared for distribution, as has a performance plan for managers, supervisors and employees. A "people's choice" awards program is envisioned, as well. Air Traffic Services plans to implement its MWE action plan within the next year.



Issac Cantu, cultural change consultant in Airway Facilities, makes a point during Air Traffic Services' MWE program.



## FAA, Boeing Work to Redesign 737 Rudder Control

The FAA will begin teaching Boeing 737 pilots a new, simplified procedure for handling jammed rudders by the end of this month. The agency also will begin identifying and ordering maintenance changes that reduce the possibility of undetected failure in the 737 rudder system.



Boeing will retrofit more than 3,000 737 jets with a newly designed rudder system.

These short-term actions are part of a major FAA/Boeing initiative to settle once and for all concerns about the Boeing 737's rudder system. Boeing also agreed to completely redesign its 737 rudder system at the request of the FAA.

The aircraft manufacturer will foot the bill — estimated at more than \$200 million — to retrofit more than 3,000 Boeing 737s with a newly designed rudder system that eliminates a range of both previously known and recently discovered failure possibilities. The retrofit is expected to take several years to complete.

Although the current rudder system complies with FAA regulations, the FAA proposed the redesign to Boeing to make the system even more reliable. It makes a safe plane safer. A goal of the redesign is to eventually eliminate the need for pilots to learn rudder procedures and training requirements unique to the 737.

The FAA's actions follow a year-long, top-to-bottom analysis of the Boeing 737 rudder system by the 737 Flight Control Engineering Test and Evaluation Board.

## Government OKs Pre-Tax Payment of FEHBP Premiums

Starting in October, Federal employees will use pre-tax dollars to pay Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) premiums under a new premium conversion program.

Premium conversion is similar to private sector plans in that it uses federal tax rules to let employees save on federal income and FICA taxes (Social Security and Medicare taxes). In most cases, employees also save on state and local income taxes.

The amount saved through premium conversion is a percentage of the premium based on the amount of money the employee pays in taxes. For example, if an employee's annual premium is \$1,800, and he/she pays 35 percent in taxes on their salary, savings would amount to 35 percent of the \$1,800 or \$630 annually.

Premium conversion will not affect federal life insurance, thrift savings, or retirement benefits, including the calculation of the "High-3" average salary used to compute retirement annuities.

Participation is automatic and began Oct. 8 for FAA employees. Employees, however, may waive participation in premium conversion each FEHBP open season.

There are two potential reasons why an employee might waive participation in the program.

- ◆ Employees who waive premium conversion retain the flexibility to drop FEHBP coverage or change from self-and-family enrollment to self-only at any time.

Employees who are participating in premium conversion may drop coverage or change to self-only enrollment only during the annual FEHBP open season or a "qualifying life event," such as marriage or divorce.

Since most employees who drop coverage or change to a self-only enrollment do so because of a life event, this flexibility may be of little value when compared to the tax savings of premium conversion.

- ◆ Employees who pay Social Security taxes on their salary may find their Social Security benefits reduced as a result of premium conversion. Employees covered by Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or CSRS Offset will not be affected. However, FERS employees who pay no federal income tax may want to investigate.

To opt out of premium conversion, submit a waiver during the next FEHBP open season, which runs Nov. 13 to Dec. 11.

Use the Employee Express Internet site at [www.employeeexpress.gov](http://www.employeeexpress.gov) or call (800) 827-6289 or TDD at (888) 880-0412.

Employees also may access the waiver form on the Human Resources Services Web site at [interweb.faa.gov/ahr/index.htm](http://interweb.faa.gov/ahr/index.htm) or by contacting the benefits office at their servicing Human Resources Management Division.

Check out the OPM Web site at [www.opm.gov/insure/health/pretaxfehbp/index.htm](http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/pretaxfehbp/index.htm) for a premium conversion financial worksheet that helps employees figure out their tax savings and potential impact on Social Security benefits for FERS employees.

## Health Costs to Rise

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That has the effect of lowering their overall taxable income, reducing their taxes in the process (see article above).

In addition, 9 million employees covered by FEHBP will have health insurance that provides the same co-payments for mental health conditions as for any other health condition. Insurance also provides the same access to specialists and coverage for medication and outpatient care related to mental health care.

During the next FEHBP open season, which runs from Nov. 13 to Dec. 11, employees will have the chance to change their health insurance coverage. For more information on the open season, access [www.opm.gov/insure](http://www.opm.gov/insure).



# Feds Can Look Forward to Long-Term Health Insurance

Details are still in the works, but FAA employees and their families will have access to long-term health care insurance by October 2002.

President Clinton's signing of a long-term health care bill comes at a time when the average age of an American is skewing older. By the year 2050, there will be 18 million Americans aged 85 or older, compared to 4 million in 1997.

Since many of these people will be unable to care for themselves due to chronic mental or physical conditions, there will be an increased need for nursing home care, assisted living facilities and adult day care. Long-term health insurance will help pay for these and other services.

Those eligible for the insurance are employees in the federal government, post office and the military, as well as their spouses, children, parents, stepparents and parents-in-law.

Premiums are expected to be lower than average for federal employees. The

Office of Personnel Management said it hopes to offer group rates approximately 15-20 percent lower than comparable individual policies.

Annual costs usually depend on an individual's age at time of enrollment, the design of the benefits package and the options available to the enrollee. The government will not contribute a portion of the cost to long-term health insurance.

The base policy likely will cover a broad range of services and provide considerable flexibility, the Office of Personnel Management said.

OPM will work with stakeholders and consultants to develop specifications for a contract that will be put out to bid. The company awarded the contract will handle implementation of the program.

The latest information, including long-term care insurance questions and answers, can be found on the OPM Web site at [www.opm.gov/insure/ltc/index.htm](http://www.opm.gov/insure/ltc/index.htm).

## Celebrating the Class of 1999

Air Traffic Director Ron Morgan made the first of several award presentations to the top performing air traffic control towers (levels five through 12), center and automated flight service station in the air traffic control system.

While it's the employees who make these facilities the class of the FAA, their respective facility numbers paint the best picture of their achievements.

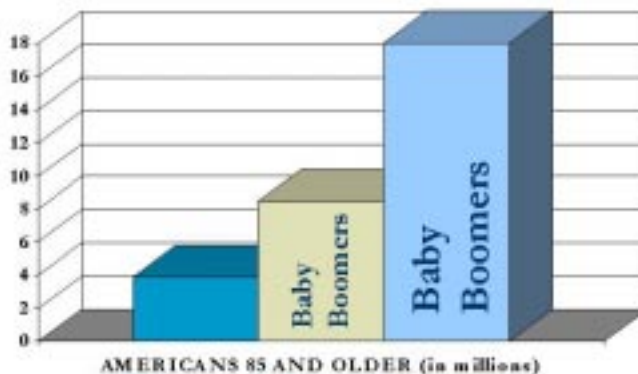
Memphis Tower received the 2000 Facility of the Year Award for Level 10. It handled flights for Memphis International Airport, the busiest cargo operation in the world, without recording a single operational error or deviation in 1999. As a result of teamwork between controllers and personnel, the airport did not have a single runway incursion even while 60 construction projects were underway over half the airport.

The FAA's Teterboro, N.J., facility won the award for Level 7 towers. It operates in one of the world's most complex airspaces, providing service to a variety of customers, from carriers, charters, business jets, military and air taxi, to lifeguard and law enforcement. The tower also was cited for regular meetings with pilots and fixed based operators based at the airport to improve communications with controllers.

Boston Air Traffic Control Center won in its category for sustaining nearly seven months and more than 1 million operations without an error or deviation. Three of the center's five operational areas went more than a year without an error. Those accomplishments came in a year the center reduced total operational errors by 20 percent. The center's controller-in-charge training program has sparked interest in other FAA facilities to develop similar programs.

## A NATIONAL ISSUE

### The aging population



The left column shows the number of Americans 85 years or older in 1997. The center column shows the number expected in 2030, and the right column for 2050.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, March 1996 & February 1998



## O'Hare Screener Wins FAA Performance Award

How does Aubrey "Bill" Harvey describe his job as checkpoint security supervisor for the largest U.S. airline at one of the world's busiest airports?

"I feel like the meat in a Big Mac sandwich," he said.

Harvey relies on his sense of humor, tact and the ability to focus to perform the ultimate balancing act: watching over his screeners and answering to his own supervisors while trying to assuage passengers balking at the increased security. "You don't take it personally," he said, about angry passengers. "We're all under a lot of pressure."

Harvey draws on experiences from his military duty when describing his work for United Airlines at Chicago O'Hare. "Being a Vietnam veteran, I know the damage [explosives] can cause. My checkpoint is like a bunker. My focal point is always on those things out of the ordinary. I don't want to have anything happen on my watch."

His attentiveness and focus have resulted in two arrests. One person was arrested for trying to bring a 12-gauge shotgun on board an aircraft. On another occasion, Harvey prevented an attempted security breach that would have caused countless passenger delays.

For these actions and his overall performance, the FAA presented Harvey with its Screener of the Year Award, Sept. 8. Administrator Jane Garvey, Irish Flynn, associate administrator for Civil Aviation Security, and a slew of industry representatives were on hand for the presentation.

"Maintaining constant vigilance while processing passengers at one of the busiest airports in the world is a tremendous achievement," Garvey said. "We salute Bill Harvey for his work as a screener, a supervisor and a trainer for United at O'Hare, where he consistently strives for superior performance both in himself and in

the screeners he oversees."

Flynn also recognized Harvey and thanked all of the nation's aviation security screeners. "As harried passengers, we sometimes forget the security screeners are there not to slow us down, but to make sure our flights are safe," he said. "Bill Harvey and his colleagues play a vital role in aviation security, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their work in protecting the nation's skies."

The hardest part of his job is keeping his screeners focused. Airports offer many distractions. "If you turn your head or back, you just missed an item. That's how fast it happens." To ensure his screeners remain alert, Harvey will plant luggage with dangerous items to test their attentiveness.

Every year, the average screener examines more than 300,000 bags and 150,000 passengers. In 1998, the screener workforce processed 1.9 billion passengers and detected more than 1,500 weapons.

The FAA, Air Transport Association, Regional Airline Association, National Air Carrier Association, Air Line Pilots Association and American Association of Airport Executives sponsor this annual award to honor the best security screener

from a pool of regional winners.

Regional winners included: Rachel Ann Elmore, Alaskan; Ronald Drake, Central; Homa Bastiniallahabadi, Eastern; Augusto Obregon, New England; Tamara Carlson, Northwest Mountain; Carmen Gilliam, Southern; Irma Figueroa, Southwest; and Kamla Ram, Western-Pacific.



Irish Flynn (left) was on hand to present Bill Harvey with his Screener of the Year Award.

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